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ABSTRACT

During the fall term of 1975, an experimental course was offered at the School of Library Science, Emporia Kansas State College. The objective was to review the general principles of interpersonal relations and to apply them to case studies involving library staff and patrons. Using a brief reading list and a case study approach, students were expected to become familiar with the relevant literature, to reflect on their own behavior, and to internalize techniques for effective interpersonal relations. A systems approach was used, but it was observed that students experienced difficulty internalizing the principles that were introduced. (EMH)

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Interpersonal Relations in Libraries: A Seminar Experiment

Florence E. DeHart

Conscious, systematic, and sustained efforts would profitably be exerted to enhance interpersonal relations in libraries and information centers. Increased attention to this subject is currently apparent in library school course offerings and in institutes for continuing education. I taught a Seminar, Interpersonal Relations in Libraries, for two terms at the School of Library Science, Emporia Kansas State College. In these Seminars, the students and I reviewed general principles of interpersonal relations and analyzed librarians' interactions with staff and patrons in case studies. We made recommendations for behaving more effectively through descriptions of intent by stating what the librarian should do. For example, "the librarian should build greater self-confidence in his assistant." We failed to come to grips, however, with precisely how the librarian should implement the behavioral improvement recommended. During the fall term, 1975, I conducted the Seminar in an experimental manner aimed toward eliminating that failure. Below are relevant insights from experiences chronicled and analyzed throughout the term.

Dr. Glenn Swogger, Jr., Staff Psychiatrist, Center for Applied Behavioral Science, Menninger Foundation, Topeka, Kansas, served as consultant in the preparation stage of the Seminar. Dr. Richard P. Douthit, Associate Professor, Department of

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Speech, Emporia Kansas State College, observed and commented on one behavioral analysis session. The Seminar also benefited from two conferences that I had by telephone with Dr. Chris Argyris, James Bryant Conant Professor of Education and Organizational Behavior, Harvard University.

OBJECTIVES

The Seminar was conducted according to the rationale for increasing behavioral effectiveness set forth in the following work: Argyris, Chris and Donald A. Schön, Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1974. Two behavioral patterns derived from extensive research are presented in this book, model I as ineffective and model II as effective.

Objectives of the Seminar were as follows: (1) that students diagnose their behavior in a way to encourage confrontation of their theories-in-use; and (2) that students attempt to internalize the governing variables and strategies of model II behavior in order more effectively to reflect these in dialogue and to confront and alter situations dominated by model-I behavior. The situations could be on-going in a stable pattern or could involve effecting change. Behavioral models I and II are outlined in greater detail below. Any other model of effective behavior identified could have been substituted for model II; none were identified, however. The Seminar dealt in effectiveness education only. It did not attempt therapy.

BASIC ASSUMPTION

I submit that adherence to one basic assumption or attitude

toward human beings is essential on the part of those involved in increasing behavioral effectiveness in themselves and others: each person without exception is worthy of respect and dignified treatment, regardless of his words and actions, simply because he is a person. One's entire philosophy and style of interpersonal dealings are shaped by adherence or lack of adherence to this assumption. For example, adherence to it precludes "chewing out" someone because he "deserves" it. It produces an environmental climate essential to constructive interaction in libraries and to on-the-job developmental training in interpersonal relations.

RELATED LITERATURE

The bibliography prepared for the course contained bibliographies, books, cassette tapes, and transparencies on background aspects of interpersonal relations, including transactional analysis, nonverbal communication, and intercultural processes. The Argyris and Schön text, which goes beyond other works to suggest a specific model for communicating more effectively, will now be placed against the background of several approaches to behavioral analysis.

Interpersonal Perception; A Theory and a Method of Research (Laing, R. D., H. Phillipson, and A. R. Lee, New York, Springer, 1966) treats a sector of the problem of interpersonal relations not fully addressed by games theory (p. 8): patterns of conjunction and disjunction in interactional perception and misperception. The Argyris and Schön text relates to this work in its demonstration of the need to surface our evaluative attributions

about others to obtain valid information and avoid misperception.

Pragmatics of Human Communication; A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes (Watzlawick, Paul, Janet Helmick Beavin, and Don D. Jackson, New York, Norton, 1967) develops the "relationship" aspect of communication, as distinguished from the "content" aspect. It utilizes analysis of dialogue. The Argyris and Schön text relates to this work in that models I and II represent two distinct types of interpersonal relationship, and it prescribes analysis of dialogue.

At a Journal Workshop: The Basic Text and Guide for Using the Intensive Journal (Progoff, Ira, New York, Dialogue House Library, 1975) recommends a diary approach similar to the recording of dialogue, but the purpose is to help an individual restructure his life through what is referred to as the journal feedback process. It seems possible that there may well be additional value to the feedback technique if applied to analysis directed toward internalizing model II behavior.

One other book will be mentioned here because of its significance in corroborating the Argyris and Schön description of model-I behavior. This behavioral mode was captured independently by a French author without reference to any particular model in a work describing the behavior of Americans (Bosquet, Alain, Les Américains, sont-ils adultes?, Paris, Hachette, 1969). Interestingly, Argyris and Schön refer to the cultural aspect of behavior (p. viii): "A may withhold this information either out of fear (if B has more power) or out of what society

has taught him to conceive of as diplomacy and tact. Blindness to incongruity between espoused theory and theory-in-use may be culturally as well as individually caused and maintained. In such cases, reeducation has to begin with an attempt to specify the patterns of existing theories-in-use."

A similar passage in the Bosquet work follows (pp. 30-31):

> Se faire aimer ... se faire des amis ... plaire Cette sorte d'entente est aussi un refus de regarder les problèmes en face. Les "relations publiques" au niveau le plus bas, exigent qu'on soit toujours de bonne humeur et qu'on ne s'aliène pas la bienveillance d'autrui; et la bienveillance est - quoi qu'on dise - l'une des caractéristiques les plus frappantes de ce peuple de bonne volonté. Bien entendu, elle "paie," puisqu'elle permet de camoufler en accord les désaccords profonds entre individus qui refusent de s'expliquer entre eux sur les problèmes essentiels de la vie, et qui mettent un point d'honneur à "gommer" leur nature véritable par une seconde nature avenante, publique, utile, sociale, acceptable à autrui.

My translation follows:

> To make oneself loved ... to make friends ... to please ... This kind of agreement is also a refusal to face problems directly. "Public relations" at the lowest level require that one always be in good humor and that one not alienate the benevolence of others; and benevolence is - whatever anyone might say - one of the most striking characteristics of this people of good will. Of course, it "pays," because it permits the disguising as agreement the deep disagreements between individuals who refuse to discuss among themselves the essential problems of life, and who make it a point of honor to "cover" their true nature by a second nature that is pleasing, public, useful, social, acceptable to others.

Most recently, Nathan M. Smith and Stephen D. Fitt ("Vertical-Horizontal Relationships; Their Applications for Librarians," Special Libraries, 1975, 66, 528-530) describe vertical and horizontal behavioral relationships which are somewhat similar to behavioral models I and II of Argyris and Schön. They also

utilize dialogue in behavioral analysis.

Fuller insight into how these individual theoretical approaches are interrelated is needed to provide a total, conceptual framework for interpersonal relations. The relationship between one important concept, that of disconfirmation, in the Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson work to behavioral model I in the Argyris and Schön text is reported below under 'Significance for General System-Theory."

PROCEDURE

Each week, students wrote up a case from three to five typed, double-spaced pages, according to instructions in the Argyris and Schön text. These cases took the form of a dialogue involved in an interpersonal transaction presented in the right column of the page and the representation of the thoughts of the "librarian" (the student) in the left column. Cases preferably were taken from the student's own experience. Libraries and personnel involved were not identified. Students also handed in one typewritten sheet with analysis of their own behavior as to whether the behavioral governing variables and action strategies underlying the dialogue approximated model I or model II. They also specified how they might have behaved more effectively.

My experience concerning whether students falsified their behavior in the written cases was identical to that of Argyris and Schön. Students' behavior so often reflected model I governing variables that it would be hard to believe they would distort dialogue to make themselves appear less effective. One student admitted, however, that on two occasions she modified the report

of her behavior to make it appear less ineffective than it actually was. She had earlier registered surprise that students were being asked to report their behavior accurately out of internal commitment to learning, rather than out of the usual motivation to elicit positive response from the instructor to the question, "Is this what you want?"

During most class sessions, "in-service training" in interpersonal relations was provided by the other students to the "librarian," the student who had volunteered to have his case discussed. A copy of each case to be discussed was made available to the other students. They then analyzed the case and questioned the "librarian." He in turn reacted to class suggestions for improved behavioral effectiveness, as well as for greater skill in analyzing his own behavior and for commitment to face up to that analysis. Two cases were discussed each session. Topics of the cases covered various interpersonal aspects in all types of libraries, including interactions between librarians, between librarians and patrons, and between librarians and an administrative authority, such as a school principle or a public library trustee. The first two weeks, the eighth week, and the final week of the ten-week Seminar were exceptions. The first two weeks were utilized to present background material on the subject of interpersonal relations with respect to general system theory and to involve students in planning the Seminar. The eighth week was devoted to discussion of the text and listening to tapes from previous weeks to evaluate behavioral effectiveness in the "in-service training" rendered. Students

were not required to prepare a case to hand in that session. The last class was devoted to discussion of a case involving myself that I presented at the students' request.

Following are the governing variables and action strategies of models I and II, paraphrased from the Argyris and Schön text, pp. 63-95. These were given to the students to refer to during discussion. These points are enlarged upon in the text, which should be read for a deeper, more accurate understanding of the skeletal framework presented here:

Model I governing variables:

1. Define goals and try to achieve them without developing with others a mutual definition of purpose.

2. Maximize winning and minimize losing. Changing goals is a sign of weakness.

3. Minimize generating or expressing negative feelings. Do not permit or help others to express their feelings. Try to get others to do what you want by setting things up so that no one is offended.

4. Be rational, objective, intellectual. Play it cool, and do not engage in any risk-taking where human relations are concerned.

Model I action strategies:

1. Design and manage the environment unilaterally. Persuade and cajole others to agree with your definition of a situation.

2. Own and control the task.

3. Unilaterally protect self. Speak with inferred

categories accompanied by little or no directly observable evidence. Blame, stereotype, suppress feelings.

4. Unilaterally protect others. Withhold valuable and important information, tell white lies, hold private meetings, and offer false sympathy. Assume that the other person needs to be protected.

Model II governing variables:

1. Maximize valid information.

2. Maximize free and informed choice.

3. Maximize internal commitment to any choice made and constant monitoring of its implementation.

Model II action strategies:

1. Make designing and managing the environment and control of the task a bilateral task.

2. Make protection of self and others a joint enterprise oriented toward growth.

3. Speak in directly observable categories rather than in inferred categories of attribution and evaluation. This leads other people to offer valid information and creates a predisposition toward inquiry and learning.

Guidelines for discussion as follows were given to the students:

1. Will the actor's behavior tend to be counterproductive to his stated objectives in the situation? Predict the possible consequences of the behavior on the actor and his environment.

2. Are the behavioral governing variables underlying the actor's dialogue incongruent with the behavior espoused in the

actor's given action strategy for fulfilling the objectives?

3. Do inconsistencies exist between the behavioral governing variables underlying the actor's dialogue?

4. Do the behavioral governing variables underlying the actor's dialogue approximate model I or model II?

5. Identify the actor's behavior in directly observable categories. Repeat what the actor said.

SIGNIFICANCE FOR GENERAL SYSTEM-THEORY

Seminar content related to general system-theory primarily in behavioral science aspects. However, the course was placed in the first session within the framework of general system-theory with respect to the decider subsystem responsible for determining and fulfilling library and information center objectives and functions. Relevant concepts from the writings of James G. Miller, were interpreted in light of recent writings in the field ("Living Systems: Basic Concepts," Behavioral Science, 1965, 10, 193-237; "Living Systems; the Organization," Behavioral Science, 1972, 17, 1-182; "The Nature of Living Systems," The Quarterly Review of Biology, 1973, 48, 63-91). As the course progressed, we sought to identify barriers against the applicability of model II in the form of organizational structures, problem solving processes, and information systems. However, over and over, the behavioral effectiveness of the librarian, regardless of whether the decider subsystem was dispersed within the library, upwardly dispersed, or outwardly dispersed, appeared to be the crucial determinant. This was believed to be true whether the librarian was attempting to im-

prove an on-going situation or to effect needed change in structure or process.

The following insight of significance for general system-theory emerged from the level of system known as the group - the class of eleven students itself. A relationship was noted which can, in turn, be exploited for further understanding group situations in libraries and information centers. A relationship exists between the concept of disconfirmation in the Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson work and behavioral model I in the Argyris and Schön text. This text does not place itself explicitly within the framework of general system-theory concepts but nonetheless embodies them. Both behavioral models can productively be placed within the useful, clear theoretical framework presented by Glenn Swogger, Jr., in his article, "Systems Theory and Small Groups" (Interdisciplinary Aspects of General Systems Theory; Proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting of the Middle Atlantic Regional Division, 1974). Rich practical applications for small group learning could ensue.

Dr. Swogger states with reference to degrees of "systemness," that "to a significant degree the components become a system via the development of a pattern of information processing." Models I and II are models for learning and represent patterns of information processing. In the Seminar being reported here, students' persistent efforts in a model I behavioral pattern to avoid confronting responsibility for their own behavior in interacting with others amounted to a discounting of themselves as individuals. Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson

(cited above, p. 86) speak of the important psychological effects of disconfirmation, which is not the same as rejection. It ignores the "other" in the sense of denying him as an individual. Rejection at least implies that the "other" has received sufficient attention to be rejected. Disconfirmation, however, conveys in effect to another, "You do not exist," rather than openly conveying, "You are wrong." Disconfirmation of "self" also has crippling effects.

Dr. Swogger raises the following question as an outgrowth of the viewpoint he presents of the systems approach as a framework in which we can increase our awareness of the complexities of the group: "To what extent, then, does a conflict within a group reflect a conflict between individuals, a conflict within individuals, or a conflict between other groups or social systems of which the individuals are representative members?" The hypothesis is offered here that Dr. Swogger's "conflict within individuals" might also extend to the effect of that aspect of an individual's model I behavioral pattern upon himself by which he discounts his own "entitivity" in a conflict concerning self-recognition and acceptance.

Further study would productively explore how individuals' discounting of "self," in whatever individuals this exists, influences the pattern of group information processing. Whether substitution of model II behavioral characteristics, if this is accomplished, tends to enhance group information processing toward more effective functioning and to increase the degree of "systemness" would also usefully be tested. The students as a whole,

especially during the first several sessions, seemed to attempt to avoid self-recognition and acceptance. They seemed not only to close their eyes to responsibility for exercising their free will but also to deny to themselves that they possessed free will to make a choice in a situation. In the few cases of students who had greater difficulty in accepting that their behavior was expected to be confrontable, it seemed more a matter of their refusing to permit themselves to give recognition to their own behavior rather than of simply refusing to permit others to confront them. At the only point in the course when I recall dead silence reigning in the classroom, I had just directly asked them whether anyone felt that dealing with his own behavior was a problem for him. Students demonstrated the above kinds of reactions in various specific ways, including the following:

(1) In the third last session toward the end of the course, out of that particular weekly set of papers from the eleven students, seven still used fictitious names in the dialogue and eight still used "he," "she," or a fictitious name in the analysis of behavior they insisted they were representing as their own. Several stated outright that they found it disconcerting to use their own names.

(2) Several students labored under a contradiction they still could not face up to beyond the middle of the course, a contradiction concerning the fact that one person can possibly elicit behavior from the "other": they insisted over and over that they knew that no matter what they said, they wouldn't change the "other's" mind. Yet they attributed full power to the

"other" to elicit behavior from them, with a feeling of hopelessness about testing their attributions, when the "other" came on first in the model I behavioral mode and especially if the "other" was a superior in the organizational hierarchy. They felt that in these instances they could not demonstrate model II behavior but that model I defensiveness on their part was inevitable.

(3) Three students asked that they be given the option to use cases not representing their own behavior. They had no ready-made cases from their own experience and felt that creating dialogue for the "other" resulted in artificiality. (Argyris and Schön had determined that where students constructed cases, the behavioral model they enacted corresponded with the model they evidenced in discussion so that apparently the artificial nature of constructing a case did not misrepresent their behavior.) I asked that they then regard their analysis of the librarian's behavior as a form of in-service training to be presented to him and then proceed to analyze their own in-service training as to whether it approximated model I or model II. These students then agreed instead to represent their own behavior in the cases.

One student next questioned the usefulness of dialogue because dialogue changes in each situation. I reviewed the concept in Argyris and Schön that descriptions of behavioral intent do not suffice for analysis. The head of a reference department, for example, may state that he tried to build the self-confidence of a reference librarian in an interview, but the actual words he used may hardly be expected to do so. This same student at

the start of the course had expressed the view that he thought interpersonal relations were handled through professional know-how, as when censorship cases are handled by giving the patron a form to fill out. I asked that he be confrontable regarding his view of the nature of human interaction in libraries and consider the concept of interpenetrability of professional and interpersonal skills in the course of practice.

Behavioral manifestations of this nature convey a "you-do-not-exist" stance toward "self," rather than an open, direct message, "You are wrong." The value in placing disconfirmation and the two behavioral models in the framework of Dr. Swogger's theoretical scheme is that gain is made toward synthesis of various theoretical approaches into a comprehensive, unified theory of interpersonal interaction that explains the interrelation of different identified aspects of behavior.

LEARNING GAMES

The above may seem to imply that students made no learning gains. This was not the case. One student commented with reference to the simulated "in-service training" given the "librarian" during the first discussion session: "I found myself just defending rather than opening up to the views of others, and I sensed this in others." Several weeks later, a mutually supportive learning environment replaced the attack-defense mode. Model I manipulation was beginning to be regarded as weak in its inability to be forthright, and model II behavior, which at first was thought to be weak, was now coming through as the stronger, more effective model. The next to the last class ses-

sion settled into a learning plateau, followed by an upshot in effectiveness in the "in-service training" discussion during the final class session. No apathy was apparent in any student at any time throughout the course.

After the first week, participation in the "in-service training" discussions involved every student in every class session to a greater or lesser degree. Conferences outside of class were requested with the two students who had not participated the first week. One was feeling too ill that evening to participate but had not wanted to leave. The other was a foreign student whose cultural background made the approach even more problematical for him than our American cultural background did for the rest of us.

THE INSTRUCTOR

A few brief comments on qualifications for the instructor are in order:

(1) The books and articles cited in this paper tend to be difficult reading, and the greater the comprehension, the greater the opportunity to utilize helpful, sound points. The instructor, then, should be one who desires a high level of intellectual challenge. This requirement may seem strange, for interpersonal relations may be thought of as involving another kind of quality. With respect to the students, insofar as I judged correctly, and I had had several students previously, students progressed throughout the Seminar directly in proportion to their native intellectual ability. The more intellectually gifted students did not necessarily begin the course at an advantage over the other

students, however, as far as interpersonal attitudes and skills were concerned.

(2) The instructor should be a living example of model II behavior at all times insofar as humanly possible. Example is the primary means by which the less intellectually gifted students progress.

(3) The instructor should be able to plan his time exceptionally well. Initial course preparation, as mentioned above, is heavy. The instructor needs to be thoroughly familiar with the Argyris and Schön text and be able to interpret it. Students were required to purchase and read it in its totality the first two weeks. They found the terminology and definitions somewhat difficult to grasp. Although it was commendable that students did not accept the text uncritically, they did make the following misinterpretations: (a) Model II allows for no legitimate authority (model II does not preclude authority but only asks that it be confrontable); (b) Behavior is supposed to be impolite according to model II if model-I behavior is characterized by politeness, however artificial (the two behavioral models are not meant to be opposites); (c) it is impossible never to formulate an evaluative assumption or attribution about others (model II behavior asks only that these be formulated on the basis of directly observable evidence and surfaced so that the "other" might provide any needed information).

Weekly preparation, too, is heavy. I had eleven students, it will be recalled. Writing comments on their papers within two or three days so that they could benefit from the comments

before preparing their next week's case averaged a minimum of one half hour per paper. One's mood at the time of doing the papers should be reflective, sensitive, and discerning. The instructor would scarcely help students by writing comments in the model I behavioral mode!

Time should also be made available for what may seem to be another strange requirement: rest. Leading effective discussions in this teaching-learning format is exceedingly challenging. The instructor should arrive clear-headed, receptive, and perceptive. Each week, with the students' permission, I taped the three-hour sessions (7-10 p. m.) and replayed the previous week's tapes before the next week's session. I learned a great deal from this process, mainly acceptance of the fact that I, too, was a learner.

In addition, ample office hour time, especially for those who need extra help, is imperative. Some students, of course, come on their own. Others need to be and should be invited. In office conferences, the leader can exemplify model II behavior by surfacing his evaluative attributions about the students. In this way, students can respond toward a possibly more accurate and assuredly a more beneficial assessment of their behavioral effectiveness. Gains like the following are more likely to be made: one student who seemed to have special difficulty permitting himself to regard his behavior as confrontable commented in a new insight of self-acceptance: "I think I must be predisposed toward model I."

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

(1) Further study of the relationship between intelligence

and ability to internalize more effective behavior would provide foundation knowledge for developing more appropriate teaching methods.

(2) The amount of lead time required for students to use this approach in a beneficial way warrants further attention. It may be that the approach should not be used in a ten-week Seminar. With the first two weeks required for introduction, and only eight sessions remaining, it is difficult to work variety of teaching method into the course when four or five weeks may be needed simply to begin utilizing the approach in a way to obtain full benefits. An attempt to measure relative effectiveness of various methods used, if these could be fit somehow into the course structure, would not yield useful information, ironically, because the most effective method could not be utilized throughout the course or lack of variety would remain a problem. The two most effective methods would need to be alternated, provided that two methods are considered to offer sufficient variety in teaching-learning format.